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Articles

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North Yemen: Troops to Iraq—Reluctant Martyrs

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The dispatch of several contingents of North Yemeni troops to Iraq over the last three years highlights the growing military cooperation between Sanaa and Baghdad, but high North Yemeni casualties have led to unrest within the Yemeni military that could generate challenges to President Salih's political authority.

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Iranian Military Engineers: Overcoming All Obstacles

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Despite shortages of trained manpower and engineering equipment, Iran's military engineers have been active in nearly all operations on the southern front since the beginning of the war with Iraq. Careful planning, organizational creativity, and flexibility in the distribution of assets have contributed to the engineers' success.

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**Iran: Spreading Islamic Fundamentalism in
Southeast Asia**

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The Iranians are working to gain influence among the Muslim populations of Southeast Asia and to build a power base from which they can spread their Islamic movement. Tehran, however, is unlikely to foment an Islamic revolution in Southeast Asia in the foreseeable future.



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Some articles are preliminary views of a subject or speculative, but the contents normally will be coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Occasionally an article will represent the views of a single analyst; these items will be designated as noncoordinated views.



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North Yemen: Troops to Iraq— Reluctant Martyrs

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The dispatch of several contingents of North Yemeni troops to Iraq over the last three years highlights the growing military cooperation between Sanaa and Baghdad. Increasing numbers of North Yemenis have been sent since last year as a result of Baghdad's military reversals. Recent fighting has produced high North Yemeni casualties, however, and led to unrest within the Yemeni military that could generate challenges to President Salih's political authority. Despite the risks, Salih values the cash payments he has received from Iraq for sending troops, and he anticipates further political and economic dividends from Baghdad in the postwar period.

The number of Yemenis sent to Iraq has grown significantly since early 1982, when Sanaa joined Jordan and Egypt in providing military "volunteers" to aid Iraq in its war against Iran.

through mid-1983 North Yemen sent approximately 1,000 men, most of whom were untrained militia recruited from the northern tribes. By June 1983 the number nearly doubled and included better trained troops that were levied from North Yemen's 25,000-man regular Army and formed into composite units known as Uruba brigades.

Sanaa's deployment of troops to Iraq has provided immediate benefits to both countries. The North Yemeni troops generally hold reserve positions behind battle lines, freeing more Iraqi troops for service at the front. In addition to paying the wages of the North Yemenis in Iraq, Baghdad has given at least \$30 million directly to Sanaa for the use of its troops. Salih values the opportunity to provide his Army and militia with the opportunity for combat experience, and the arrangement reduces the size of his own military payroll.

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Longer term considerations motivate Salih as well. Even though the North Yemeni contingent is only of token size, Salih probably views it as a bargaining chip that he can use to elicit Iraqi economic and military assistance after the war. He probably hopes that he can rely increasingly on Iraq to maintain and resupply his Soviet-equipped military forces and reduce his direct reliance on Moscow.

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Iraq Asks for More

Recent military setbacks in the war with Iran have prompted Baghdad to request and receive even larger numbers of North Yemeni troops. Following the Iranian capture of Al Faw in February,

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North Yemen deployed a complete infantry brigade—about 2,000 men—rather than sending a composite force levied from all the brigades. North Yemen also sent additional military personnel, including an artillery unit, in response to an Iraqi request in March. The US Embassy in Sanaa reports North Yemeni officials have confirmed that more than 3,000 North Yemenis have been serving in Iraq since March.

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that, as of early July, Salih had stepped up the recruitment of North Yemenis for

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Iraq, [] Baghdad in late June promised generous financial compensation to the families of all North Yemenis sent to Iraq. []

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Heavy casualties in recent fighting in Iraq, coupled with Salih's efforts to recruit more troops, have produced growing discontent in the North Yemeni armed forces. [] the North Yemeni contingent suffered 400 casualties in spring fighting this year, largely because Iranian troops broke through Iraqi frontlines into positions held by Yemenis. [] confirms that at least 120 Yemeni casualties were evacuated from Al Faw in March. []

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Salih probably will not increase significantly the size of the Yemeni military presence in Iraq. His preoccupation with the military threat from Aden makes it unlikely that he will dispatch additional numbers of better trained personnel from regular Army brigades. Salih probably will try to send more tribal militia to Iraq, but recruitment will be difficult if high casualties in Iraq continue and tribal shaykhs discourage volunteers. Nevertheless, Salih is determined to protect the equities he is building for future Iraqi economic and military assistance and will try to maintain North Yemen's military presence at its current 3,000-man level. He also is likely to press Baghdad for more immediate financial and military aid. []

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Outlook

Salih will face challenges to his political authority if he continues to force Yemeni troops to serve in Iraq. Recalcitrant tribal shaykhs outside Sanaa may seek to exploit anti-Salih sentiment among disgruntled militia and Army personnel, and potential rivals in the military, such as Chief of Staff 'Abdallah Bashiri, may use the issue to try to undercut Salih's control over the armed forces. We believe Salih would deal ruthlessly with serious challenges to his political authority, but he will have to move carefully to avoid provoking more widespread military dissatisfaction. []

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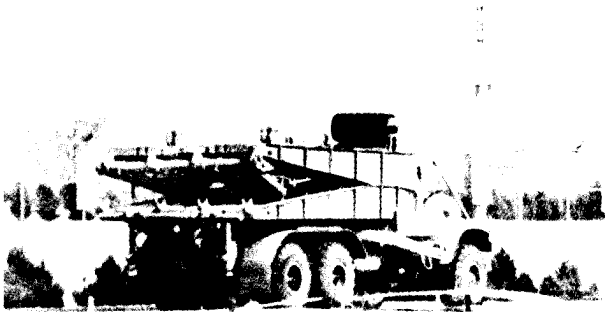


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**Iranian Military Engineers:
Overcoming All Obstacles**

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Despite shortages of trained manpower and engineering equipment, Iran's military engineers have been active in nearly all operations on the southern front since the beginning of the war with Iraq. The construction of bridges, roads, and causeways near Al Faw and throughout the southern border region illustrates the critical role Iranian military engineers have played in support of Iran's war effort.¹ Careful planning, organizational creativity, and flexibility in the distribution of assets have contributed to the engineers' success. Assistance from civilian engineers and the Revolutionary Guard's Reconstruction Crusade also have been important.



Iranian TMM scissors bridge

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The Southern Battlefields

The geography of the southern border region and Iran's tactics have increased the importance of the engineers to Iran's war effort. The southern Iran-Iraq border region is a semiarid area, but marshes, rivers, and the Shatt al Arab waterway present significant obstacles to fighting and the movement of troops and supplies. During the winter rainy season, runoff accumulates in low spots and marshes and miry areas expand, causing significant flooding. Mobility can remain degraded for weeks, restricting vehicle movement to improved roads or high ground.

Iran has chosen to concentrate its efforts in the south in part to support its primarily infantry operations. The military engineers' provision of assault bridges and boats and their efforts to increase the capacity of Iranian supply routes with bridges, ferries, causeways, and roads have enabled Iran to launch and support several major offensives in the past three years. Effective engineer support has also been critical in helping the Iranians to overcome Iraq's extensive defensive fortifications, trenchlines, and flooded areas.

¹ Although military engineers operate throughout the country, this analysis will focus on the southern border region, where the heaviest fighting has occurred.

Organization

The Iranian army has at least 10 combat engineer battalions, four bridge battalions, and two separate engineer companies. The bridge battalions and four of the combat engineer battalions belong to the Engineer Command, while the rest are assigned to army divisions. The 411th Engineer Group appears to have primary responsibility for assigning battalions within the army. This unit also is responsible for coordinating the allocation of all engineering assets according to the directives of the operational headquarters. Equipment and units are frequently and freely attached and detached between divisions, between the army and the Revolutionary Guard, and between divisions and the operational headquarters.

The army also relies on civilian engineering ministries and companies.



Reconstruction Crusade, a civilian branch of the Revolutionary Guard responsible for rural

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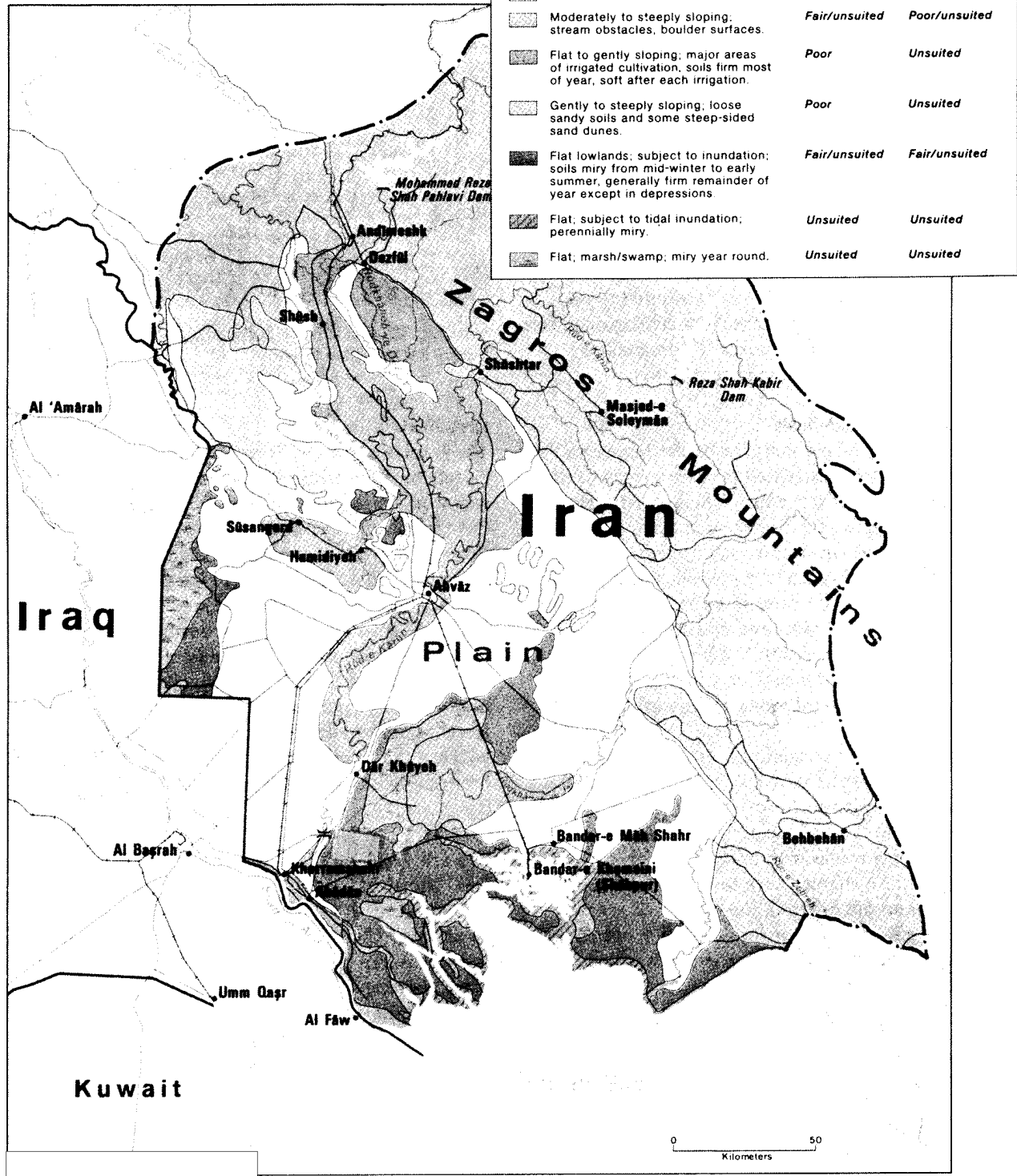
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Khuzestan Province: Conditions for Cross-Country Vehicular Movement



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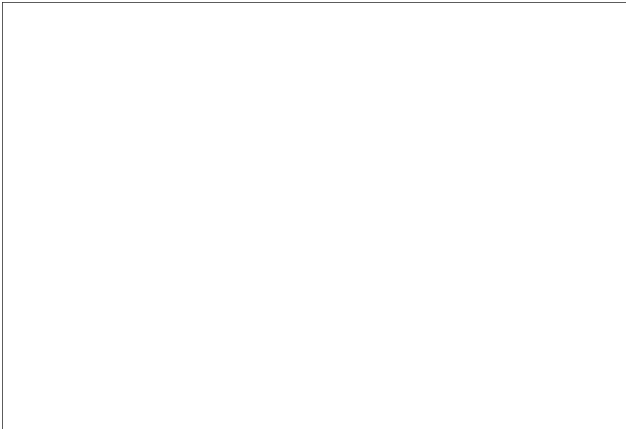
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Iranian DOK multipurpose engineer tractor from Czechoslovakia

development, is an important source of manpower for army engineer projects. The military will continue to rely on civilians to perform much of the necessary work in rear areas so that army engineers can concentrate on combat-support missions.



Equipment Shortages

Iran has a shortage of military engineering equipment. Most of it dates from the Shah's reign and is in poor condition due to inadequate maintenance.



Iran probably is overcoming some of these problems by producing its own equipment. The Iranians are building many of their own pontoon bridges and assault boats.

**Innovation and Hard Work:
Engineering Activities in the Iran-Iraq War**

Iran's military engineers' creativity and extraordinary efforts have contributed greatly to Iranian success throughout the war:

- *The Iranians were the first to use intentional flooding during the war to impede the Iraqi advance on Ahvaz in November 1980.*
- *Iranian engineers built a road through previously impassable sand dunes that allowed the Revolutionary Guard to flank and eventually defeat Iraqi forces at the battle of Bostan in December 1981.*
- *In the spring of 1982, the engineers placed four bridges across the 75- to 150-meter span of the Karun River, enabling Iran to move 20,000 troops, 500 armored vehicles, and 200 tons of ammunition across in one night.*
- *To relieve the pressure of Iraqi flooding in 1984, Iranian engineers dug a 35-kilometer canal to carry water from the frontlines to the Karun River.*
- *Iran has brought much of the Hawizah marsh under its control. In 1984 the engineers constructed a pontoon bridge there over 15 kilometers long.*

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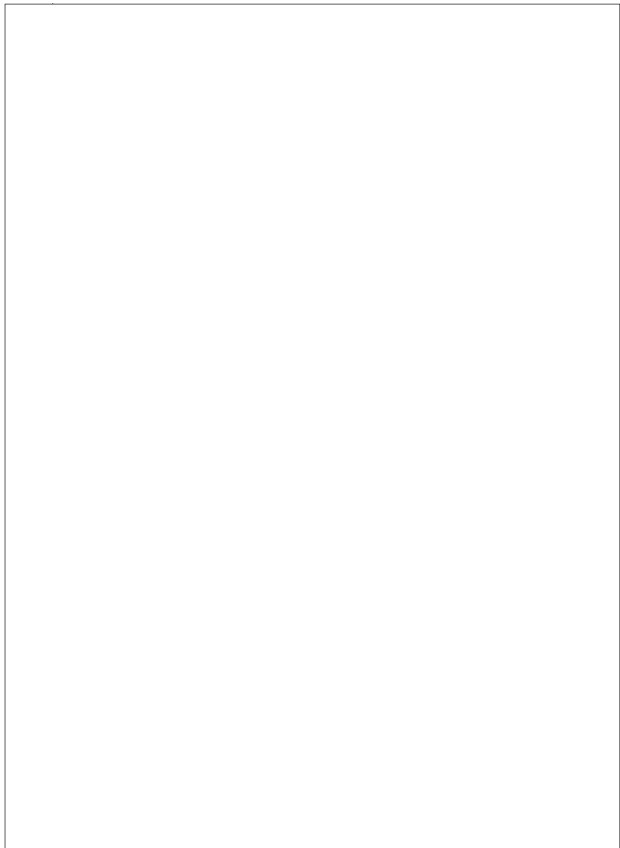
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Iranian pontoon bridge



Selected Iranian Military Engineering Equipment

Type	Amount	Source
Bridging equipment		
PMP pontoon set	5-8	USSR
GSP amphibious ferry	65	USSR
TMM truck-mounted bridge	60 +	USSR
Chieftain armored vehicle launched bridge	14	United Kingdom
Bailey bridge	Unknown	United Kingdom, United States
M4T6 bridge	7	United States
Heavy construction equipment		
MDK-2M and BTM ditching machines	17	USSR
DOK general purpose tractor	Unknown	Czechoslovakia
Bulldozers	50 +	Japan, USSR
Roadgraders	Unknown	Czechoslovakia, Japan, USSR
Mobile cranes	300 +	West Germany, USSR
Miscellaneous equipment		
BMK-series bridging boats	60 +	USSR
Assault boats, NDL-10/-20	80 +	USSR
DIM road minesweeper	8 +	USSR
AN/PSS-11 mine detector	350	United States





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A Busy Year

 Iran overcomes its deficiencies sufficiently to support major offensives. In 1986 alone, the engineers have had many significant accomplishments. They have improved mobility for maneuver units, obstructed enemy movement, protected units in defensive positions, and provided other general support such as road construction. 

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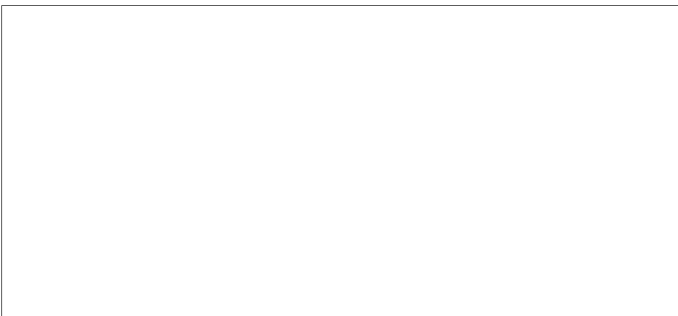
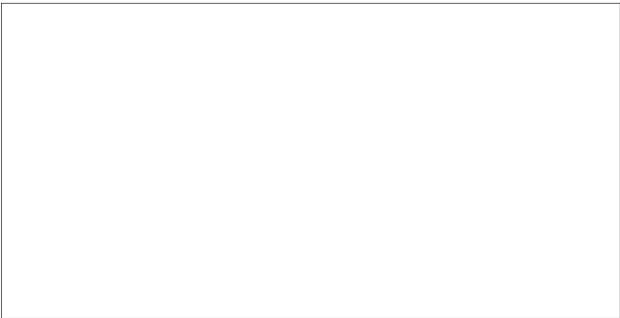
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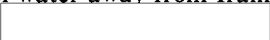


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Creativity is another factor in Iran's success. To foil Iraqi air superiority during the latter stages of the Al Faw campaign, the Iranians would partly dismantle their bridges and leave them along the shore during the day and rely on boats and ferries for transport. At night, however, the bridges would be quickly reassembled and used. 


General engineering support continues to improve Iran's lines of communication in the south. With considerable help from their civilian counterparts, Army engineers have built new roads, forward area resupply points, billets, motor parks, and helipads. The engineers have responded to Iraqi flooding throughout the war by constructing dams and canals to channel water away from Iranian defensive positions. 

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Revolutionary Guard sappers led the attack on Al Faw, clearing the western shore of the Shatt al Arab for assault boats. Engineer boats, ferries, and bridges were essential in supporting the Iranian salient by facilitating the movement of men, supplies, and heavy equipment. Numerous bridges and ferries throughout the Abadan Peninsula increased the capacity of available lines of communication despite Iraqi airstrikes. 

Outlook

Iran's crash efforts to prepare for offensives probably will suffice for the near term. The inability to replace trained personnel and some equipment, however, will make Iranian gains more difficult to sustain, particularly if Iran should lengthen its lines of communications by further advances inside Iraq. 



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The Iranians almost automatically begin digging in after reaching an objective, and Iraq has found that entrenched Iranians are difficult to remove without costly man-to-man fighting. At Al Faw, Iran was quick to ferry its heavy equipment across the Shatt al Arab. Bulldozers immediately went to work to improve captured Iraqi positions and build trenches and berms for the Iranian forces. In one instance, 

Iran probably will continue to focus its efforts against the southern border region because it has the best chance of achieving a breakthrough there. The belligerents' strategies and the region's geography will keep the engineers as essential components to any Iranian success. The long-term prospect is that the Iranians will remain flexible in shifting both units and equipment. 

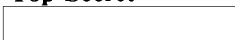
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 Engineers demonstrated their quick thinking by using captured Iraqi pumps to flood low-lying areas around Al Faw, frustrating Iraqi efforts to drain an area protecting Iran's defensive lines. 

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**Iran: Spreading Islamic
Fundamentalism in
Southeast Asia**

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The Iranians are working to gain influence among the Muslim populations of Southeast Asia and to build a power base from which they can spread their Islamic movement. Tehran, however, is unlikely to foment an Islamic revolution in Southeast Asia in the foreseeable future. Tehran regularly sponsors Asian students for study and tours in Iran and organizes local conferences and seminars. Iranian diplomats seek out local Muslim groups and provide them with propaganda and financial support. Tehran also provides military and intelligence training to some Muslim groups.

Iran's export of the revolution and propaganda activities worldwide are coordinated by a three-minister council in Tehran consisting of the Ministers of Islamic Guidance, Interior, and Intelligence. The council operates independently of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and can order the support of that ministry as required. Clerics from the theological school in Qom provide intellectual support and ideas and travel abroad on behalf of the council. Many of the clerics are given official and diplomatic documents by the Foreign Ministry for their travels.

Malaysia

An Iranian Embassy was established in Kuala Lumpur in April 1982.

The Embassy has disseminated Islamic propaganda and provided financial support for Malaysian groups and individuals sympathetic to Iran.

In recent years the Iranians have developed a better understanding of Islam as it is practiced in Malaysia and have become more active in influencing Malays, particularly members of Malaysia's Muslim opposition party, the PAS. PAS leaders have traveled to Iran on several occasions in violation of agreements between Kuala Lumpur and Tehran prohibiting such travel without

Malaysian Government approval. the Malaysian Government was seriously concerned by the perceived threat to the country's internal security posed by PAS leaders who were described as religious fanatics.

these Islamic extremists were gaining support in the military. Pro-Iranian, antigovernment propaganda spread among the troops may have led to a government decision to create an "Armed Services Religious Corps," responsible for controlling sermons and publications that might cause public disruptions. The government that year arrested some PAS leaders and strengthened the internal security force charged with internal subversion.

During 1986 the PAS and another pro-Iranian Islamic religious group have continued their efforts to increase their influence among Malays. Both groups have established private religious schools in rural areas to spread the fundamentalist message.

Philippines

The Iranian Embassy in the Philippines began in late 1983 to seek close relations with several Islamic organizations in the Philippines but has been successful with only one, the Muslim Youth Union of the Philippines (MYUP).

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Thailand

[redacted]

[redacted] the
Iranians have also supported Daru Ahl El Bayt
(DAB), a Shia Muslim organization active in
Bangkok. This group, including a women's chapter,
translates Arabic and Farsi books into Thai, holds
regular weekly lectures, and runs a hostel for Shias
and other Muslim visitors. Iran, through the DAB,
recruits Thai youths for a six-year course in Shia
Islamic jurisprudence at Shia religious seminaries in
Iran. [redacted]

[redacted] in 1984 a
representative of the Iranian Ministry of Islamic
Guidance was sent to Bangkok to open an Iranian
cultural center. The Iranians also sent a cleric to
travel through Thailand establishing contacts in the
Muslim community. [redacted]

[redacted] Iran was cultivating newspaper reporters,
Muslim parliamentarians, members of Shia student
organizations, and other influential Muslims. Some
were offered all-expense-paid trips to Iran. The
Embassy published a monthly magazine entitled *Sarn
Islam (Message of Islam)* in both Thai and English.
Most recipients of the free magazine live in the
predominantly Muslim southern part of Thailand or
in Chiang Mai province. [redacted]

Iran's Islamic Guidance Ministry also has used
seminars to identify potential sympathizers in
Thailand who were then invited to Iran for
clandestine training and instruction. [redacted]

[redacted] the head of the Islamic
Guidance office in Bangkok has discussed preliminary
plans for an Iranian-sponsored school for Shia
Muslim ideology and indoctrination to be established
in Bangkok on a one-year experimental basis.

[redacted] however, budget
cuts have forced Iran to halt all propaganda activities
by the Islamic Guidance office in Thailand. [redacted]

[redacted]

Indonesia

Iran is very active in Indonesia, where Tehran is
cultivating a fundamentalist network. The Iranian
Embassy in Jakarta has distributed antigovernment
magazines and pamphlets throughout Indonesia. The
Iranians use other standard propaganda techniques
such as film showings and student lectures. They also
sponsor a youth organization and "Pesantrens"
(Islamic religious boarding schools). Moreover, they
finance trips to Iran by members of the Indonesian
Muslim Students' Association for training.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Singapore

The Singapore Government, concerned over the risk
of Iranian activities, has refused to allow Tehran to
establish an embassy but has permitted it to open a
trade office. Iranian diplomats posted in neighboring
countries visit Singapore with increasing frequency,
and the number of officially sponsored Iranian
students studying in Singapore has increased. Iran,
however, seems to have little influence among the
small Shia community in Singapore. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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Prospects

Iran probably will continue to use its contacts in Southeast Asia to seek support for its revolution, its position in the war with Iraq, and its effort to discredit the United States. Budget cuts brought on by the decline in oil revenues, however, may force Tehran to pursue less ambitious programs in the near term.

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There is little likelihood of an Iranian-style Islamic revolution taking place in any Southeast Asian country. Muslim groups in the region have gained strength and direction as a result of Iran's policies, but they lack the unity and support required for political success. For most Muslims in the region, Islamic radicals are extremists operating on the fringe of establishment politics.

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Iran's network of contacts in Southeast Asia gives Tehran some leverage to influence government policies on such issues as the Iran-Iraq war, the agenda of the Nonaligned Movement, and Israel's membership in the United Nations. The fundamentalist networks apparently have not been used to support Iranian-directed terrorism on a significant scale, but the potential for such use exists and could become stronger as more Muslims given terrorist training by Iran return to their home countries. Eventually Iran may use some of these Muslims in sporadic attacks on Western or moderate Arab targets in Southeast Asia.

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